Illustrators

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ISSUE THREE

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ILLUSTRATION

AUTUMN 2012 ISSUE 33

BLACK AND WHITE: A SHADOWY HISTORY OF THE ART OF SILHOUETTES

STREET TALK: THE BOOK ARTISTS' RESPONSE TO A BAGHDAD BOMB

EQUAL RIGHTS? THE RISE AND RISE OF ILLUSTRATORS IN THE 1860S

ON GUARD: ENTER ROSPA'S ARCHIVE

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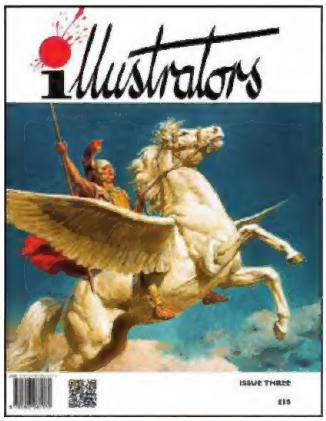

Cover Image: Fortunino Matania

illustrators

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EDITORIAL

As each issue of ***illustrators*** becomes a tangible reality, I have the privilege of working with a highly talented team. This issue is no exception, and with our associate editor Bryn Havord not only writing a couple of fascinating features, but also applying his experienced eye to the finer points of typography and layout, I feel we now have a truly professional and stylish finish that befits a publication celebrating some of the finest art any reader could wish to encounter. Bryn was not only commissioning some of the greatest illustrators on both sides of the Atlantic throughout the 1960s and 1970s, but won two national awards for his work as a magazine and newspaper designer. He was special projects art editor responsible for the pre-production dummies of *Nova* magazine, which is rightly regarded as one of the iconic style magazines of its time. He is also a best-selling non-fiction author, as well as a regular contributor to Leif Peng's *Today's Inspiration* illustration blog.

Bryn's feature on the chic and dynamic art of Andy Virgil provides a fascinating insight into the heady 1960s; an era when illustration and illustrators seemed as exciting as the events they portrayed. His feature on Peter Maddocks provides an opportunity to savour the art of one of Fleet Street's most innovative cartoonists.

Our lead feature takes a much needed and long overdue look at the life and career of Fortunino Matania, an artist whose stunning work acted as a visual diary of the rapidly changing world of the early 20th century, as well as a portal into classical antiquity. Keith Chapman rounds out the issue with the stories of his editorship at Micron; one of the most unlikely fly-by-night publishers ever.

We would like to extend our thanks as well to Richard Gardner, Sophia Brothers at the National Railway Museum, Susan Ross at the Canadian War Museum, Laurence Heyworth, Anita Virgil, Mitch Itkowitz, Brandi Budziak, and Brian Sanders.

Finally we would like to extend a special and overdue thank you to the John Noot Galleries, who provided us with five scans of some exquisite David Wright artwork, which appeared on pages 10, 14, 15 and 16 of our previous issue.

The opinions expressed in *illustrators* are those of the writers, and are not necessarily those of the editor and publishers. The accuracy of the authentication of all images is the responsibility of the contributors.

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Fortunino Matania

ABOVE: Matania uses a formalized grid-like design to counterpoint the voluptuous curves of a Greek runner tying on her shoes. FACING PAGE: German Uhlans attacking a hastily thrown together Belgian barricade in 1914.

Peter Richardson looks at the work of an artist, whose ability to plunge his audience into the heart of historical events, with the sureness of a reportage photographer, was second to none.

In 1963, the eighty-two year-old illustrator Fortunino Matania was struggling to meet a deadline. Despite his advanced age, he was still busy working on commissions and, although his client list had contracted, the expectations placed upon him were as great as ever. His primary client was the visionary editor Leonard Matthews, who had long been a passionate champion of Matania's work, and had ensured that Matania would have as much work from him as he could accommodate. When Matthews had launched his ground-breaking children's weekly *Look and Learn* a year earlier, Matania had been one of the first illustrators he had secured for the project. *Look and Learn* was the ideal vehicle for Matania's talents, as its primary focus was to inform and entertain children, and historical subject

Courtesy of Look and Learn

ABOVE: Matania's last published illustration; King Richard II entertains his child bride Isabella from 'A Pageant of Kings', *Look and Learn* 1963. Many elements of the painting remain unresolved in the artist's rush to meet his deadline

matter was where *Look and Learn* really shone. As a consequence, Matania's work was being seen on a weekly basis by a new generation of children. As he provided illustrations which transported his young audience back into the world of classical antiquity, his artwork was as assured as ever, providing readers with the closest thing to a photographer's eye on events which would otherwise have been consigned to the pages of the dry and dusty textbooks, through which many of them were required to assimilate their history.

When Matthews mooted the idea of a new and epic series depicting the history of Britain, as seen through its succession of monarchs, Matania was his logical first choice to bring Alfred Duggan's stirring text to vivid life. The series entitled 'A Pageant of Kings' was a tour-de-force for Matania. Starting with William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hastings, he set about producing a series of full-colour, full-page illustrations in oils, rather than the pencil and gouache that he normally employed. Week after week the paintings arrived on Matthew's desk, and week after week the editor, whose pursuit of excellence in all things he turned his hand to was legendary, stared in amazement at the artwork he was receiving, calling in other members of staff to share the moment with him. A cavalcade of seminal moments from British history were played out in Matania's oils, from the depiction of Richard I leading his men against the armies of Saladin, through the civil wars of King Stephen, to the signing of the Magna Carta. Here was the story of the Island Race as

Courtesy of Richard Gardner Antiques

ABOVE: Scanned from the original artwork, the revised version, completed by Matania shortly before his death. The princess has been extensively reworked while the rest of the painting has been further refined to draw the viewer's attention to the two figures expressions.

delineated by a master's hand. The series was a triumph. That was until his painting of Richard II with his child bride Isabella, when the infirmities of age finally seemed to latch themselves onto Matania's brush. The work when it was eventually delivered to Matthews, closer to the deadline than either artist or editor would have preferred, was unfinished, Matania having evidently struggled with the rendition of an eight year old girl as well as having failed to complete several other elements of the painting. Matthews was disappointed, the painting was still sufficiently good to go to press with, but it was nowhere near as good as its predecessors.

Matania evidently felt equally discomforted and offered to rework the painting, as not only was it to appear in *Look and Learn,* but Matthews, ever the patron of the arts, wanted it to take its place alongside the other paintings in the series for his own collection. So the painting was returned to Matania and, ever the perfectionist, the artist set about resolving all the problems that had so beset the painting prior to its delivery to Matthews. The painting was duly completed, but, before it could be returned to Matthews, Matania died. There were to be no more Matania paintings for 'A Pageant of Kings', and the painting of Richard II and his little princess remained amongst the great man's effects while arrangements for his funeral were made.

The story of Fortunino Matania's rise to pre-eminence as the greatest

Text continues on page 11

Courtesy of Look and Learn

Courtesy of Look and Learn

ABOVE: 'A Pageant of Kings', William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings, *Look and Learn* 1963 and OPPOSITE: Richard the Lionheart fighting the forces of Saladin.

Courtesy of Look and Learn

Text continued from page 5

historical illustrator of his day, or come to that, any day, is as remarkable as the work that he created. When Fortunino Matania was born in Naples in 1881, his career as a painter was to a certain extent already predestined. His father Eduardo was a painter and illustrator, and progenitor of a family of artists whose lineage was to include many other illustrators in Fortunino's immediate and extended family. With improvements in printing technology, and a concomitant flowering of outlets for illustration, artists such as Eduardo, found their work in constant demand, and it was scarcely surprising therefore that he should regard his studio as a family business, and his son Fortunino as an apprentice in waiting. It was Eduardo who was to provide the boy with the most comprehensive and structured training that any art student could wish for. Eduardo's simple and overriding precept was that a real artist should have the ability to master all the disciplines of pictorial expression, and as such he encouraged the boy not merely to confine his studies to drawing and painting, but to master the ability to model, carve and work in metal and wood. In short to become a well rounded craftsman. His exposure to art and the world of artists was so all consuming that Eduardo, a regular patron of 'The Artist's Café' in Naples, would take along the precocious infant to meet other artists. They, in turn, would be charmed and awed as the infant drew on the marble tabletops, whilst waiters took orders, and opinions on life and art were traded. As Fortunino's education progressed, so his father gradually inducted him into working on commissions. The boy proved a willing and capable assistant to his father, and by the age of nine, his prodigious talents had been

ABOVE: Gladiators
TOP: Princess Nefertiti
FACING PAGE: A scene from the reign of King Stephen. Matania's scenes from antiquity were reinforced by his insistence that every work he applied his talents to should be underpinned by meticulous research, as these scenes attest.

Matania's ability to propel his audience through the page and into a world that shimmered and eddied with pulsating life, was at its most potent in scenes such as Piccadilly Circus at Night, painted shortly after the artist's arrival in London.

Courtesy of the National Railway Museum / Science & Society Picture Library

TOP: A view of Blackpool from one of Matania's original oils for the London Scottish and Midland railway. ABOVE: A painting from a booklet promoting the Blackpool Tower. Such was the popularity of the booklet that it remained in print for many years. FACING PAGE: Two of Matania's posters extolling the virtues of Southport which were among a total of six paintings he completed for Southport Corporation and the London Midland and Scottish Railway in 1936.

Courtesy of the National Railway Museum / Science & Society Picture Library

the arrival of the tank, all a far off cry from the earlier artworks depicting mounted cavalry galloping through still relatively unsullied landscapes. It was Matania's ability to build upon his researches with imagery kindled in his rich and fertile imagination which, when wedded to his awe-inspiring draughtsmanship, allowed him to create whatever he could envisage. By the time the armistice had been declared, his reputation as a peerless illustrator of events beyond the purview of a camera lens was beyond challenge. He was simply the best.

While Europe settled into its uneasy peace, Matania's work continued, and matching the post war desire to live for the moment, he was called upon to work on a series of advertisements for English coastal holiday resorts. He was by this stage working with the UK illustration agents Rogers and Co (see *A Brush With Fitzrovia – The Elegant Art of David Wright*, ***illustrators*** issue 2). The ability of the Rogers team to market what the agency regarded as their prize asset (and according to legend, Matania was their most important asset) was matched by the artist's abilities to turn even the most prosaic of briefs into a work of beauty. So a series of railway posters extolling the delights of Southport was added to his continuing coverage of newsworthy events, and glimpses of the upper echelons of society at play.

However, there were only so many illustrations of bobbed and shingled dowagers and their dinner-jacketed escorts that could be served up before a certain degree of ennui descended. It was time for something a little more exotic and, as if in answer to a prayer, in the early spring of 1929 a new avenue for Fortunino Matania to indulge his love of antiquity was opened up with the debut of *Brittania and Eve*. The new weekly, with its remit to inform and entertain the modern woman about fashion and home making, had a positive and upbeat style and an impressive roster of

SOUTHPORT
FOR A HOLIDAY IN WINTERTIME
FROM THE PAINTING BY FORTUNINO MATANIA R.I.
GUIDE FREE FROM INFORMATION BUREAU, SOUTHPORT

Courtesy of the National Railway Museum / Science & Society Picture Library

ABOVE: Matania's oil painting of Blackpool as it appeared in a 1937 poster for the London, Midland and Scottish Railway. From the 1920s to the late 1940s there was a profusion of beautifully designed posters celebrating the delights of railway travel with many of the UK's premier illustrators providing the artwork.

Andy Virgil

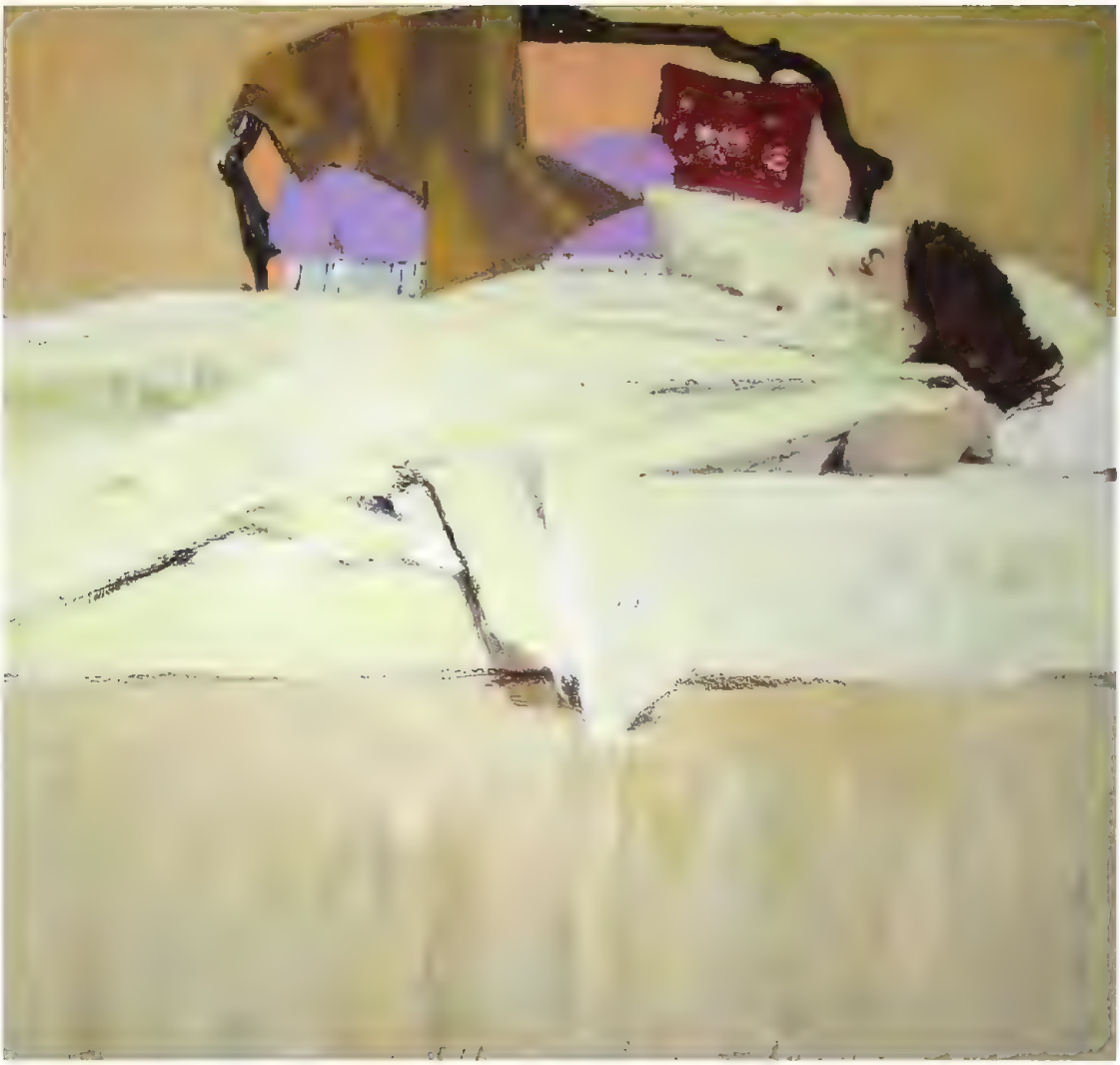
Bryn Havord explores the life and work of one of New York City's leading illustrators.

ABOVE: An unpublished painting of a woman in bed, reveals Virgil's innate sense of design and sublime use of colour.
RIGHT: Another personal work, with imaginative use of negative space and dynamic layout, adding Virgil's distinctive sparkle to his depiction of William F. Buckley Jr. The editor of the *National Review*.

It was in September 1964, and after we had enjoyed a superb dinner, my hosts Andy and Anita Virgil took me into their garden for a breath of fresh air. It had been a terrific evening until then, when they frightened the life out of me, telling me about the indigenous and venomous copperhead snakes which could be found in their garden. I encouraged Anita to make some coffee so that I could get back to safety inside the house.

I had been an admirer of Andy Virgil's work as a romantic fiction illustrator since the late 1950s. At the time of my visit, I was working as the art director of *Woman's Mirror*, a photogravure magazine published in London, with weekly sales of 1.2 million copies. I subscribed to all the major women's magazines published in the USA, as well as the *Saturday Evening Post, Sports Illustrated,* and *Boys' Life,* so was familiar with the work of all the leading American illustrators. I was on one of my trips to New York City, visiting photographers and illustrators who I occasionally commissioned to produce work for me, and wanted Virgil to produce the illustrations for an eight-part serial entitled *Hunter, Hunter, Get Your Gun,* set in the American south. The Virgils lived in Kinnelon, New Jersey, and when I arrived for dinner, was delighted to discover that they lived in a traditional colonial house which was built in 1847, and which had been exquisitely furnished in the colonial style; all of which fitted perfectly with the settings described in the serial.

Virgil's London agent, Albert Landau, of the Transworld Feature Syndicate, had offices in London, Paris, and New York City, and made the arrangements for me to meet Virgil so we could discuss the serial. I gave him the text, divided into weekly parts, and gave him a rough idea of the type



Courtesy the Private Collection of Grace Marcus. Photographed by Dan Stein

Nobody ever can have all the answers
But if you have the heart the answers
sometime come to you- one at a time
A present from an Angel

Courtesy of Mitch Itkowitz and Brandi Budziak Graphic Collectibles

ABOVE AND FACING PAGE: Early examples of Virgil's work reveal a dynamic and inventive approach to layout. The influence of friend, colleague and mentor Joe De Mers, is also apparent.

ABOVE: One of several studies that Virgil made of paintings by Rembrandt.

of illustrations that I wanted for each part, and whether they would be in colour or monochrome. Two weeks later, he came to my hotel in mid-town Manhattan and delivered the illustration for the first week's installment, which was exactly what I wanted.

It was the day of the Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Johnson election for the presidency. We had coffee, and spent quite a long time discussing the possible outcome of the election, and what the implications would be. Most of the Western World heaved a huge sigh of relief when Johnson was re-elected as president.

Anita Virgil had an artistic talent of her own, and she had kindly given me a charming drawing of a huntsman that she had recently completed. So I flew back to London with two Virgil originals. The multi-talented Anita went on to become a universally recognized Haiku poet, and in 1973, she became President of the Haiku Society of America.

Andy Virgil was born Andrew Virgil Calafatello in January 1925 in New York City to Sicilian immigrant parents. He was the middle child of three. His mother, Josephine, a highly skilled seamstress in the city's garment district, was the one who encouraged his artistic expression from the time he was very young.

After graduating, he went to work in a marble-sanding factory, and was then drafted into the army. He spent about a year in the artillery, serving in the USA, and was a crack shot. But a long-time arthritic condition of the spine, which had begun to plague him in his teens, led to a medical discharge.

In his early twenties, he could be found setting up his easel at the

Time out for Pepsi–
the *Light* refreshment

IF you're interested in averages—observe the looks of the average modern woman. She's trimmer, she's slimmer, because she prefers lighter, less-filling food and drink.

Pepsi-Cola—the modern, light refreshment—fits right in with her sensible diet. Today's Pepsi, reduced in calories, is never heavy, never too sweet. Wherever you play, say "Pepsi, please," and refresh without filling.

Pepsi-Cola refreshes without filling

One of Virgil's favourite models, Tippi Hedren famed for her lead role in Alfred Hitchcock's film 'The Birds', appears in the painting he created forJessamyn West's 'In Search of a Kiss'. Anita Virgil has said that Hedren was possessed of "perfect-to-draw face, figure, hands and feet". Assets which, when combined with her professionalism and dependability, made her a joy to work with.

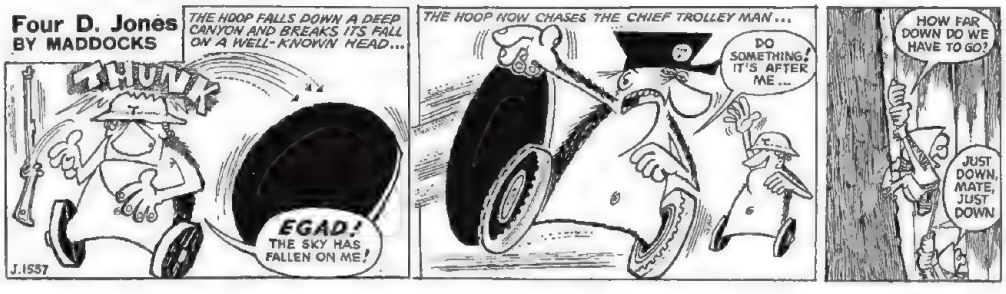
Peter Maddocks

Bryn Havord looks at the life and times of one of Fleet Street's most successful and prolific cartoonists

In 1955, the cartoonist Peter Maddocks, created a new style of daily strip cartoon entitled *Four D. Jones.* It was published in the *Daily Express* newspaper, and featured the eponymous *Jones,* who was the incompetent sheriff of Buzzards Creek in America. He had a time-hoop, and when he stepped through it, he entered the fourth dimension, and could go backwards and forwards in time: it was time travel long before *Doctor Who.* He got involved in amazing adventures; there was danger, chaos, humour, pathos, and fantastic drawings. It was a cult strip, and required daily reading for those of us who worked in advertising and publishing, and a good many others besides! The strip remains one of the very few successful indigenous British comic strips. Peter told me, "I drew about fourteen sample strips, complete with dialogue, and managed to get an interview with Arthur Christiansen, the legendary editor of the *Daily Express.* He asked me to show him a synopsis of further story lines. I didn't have any, and said I'd make it up as I went along. I told him of some of the ideas I had, and remarkably, he said 'OK, you can start daily from next Monday. I'll give you ten weeks to show me what you can do'. The strip lasted for ten years!" Peter went on, "However, it wasn't all plain sailing. After it had been running for a couple of years, Arthur Christiansen, while on holiday in the south of France with his proprietor Lord Beaverbrook, had a heart attack, and Edward Pickering replaced him as editor. He took an instant dislike to me and *Four D. Jones,* claiming that its content did not belong in a Conservative newspaper, and he stopped publishing the strip in mid story.

"Days passed, and there was a noticeable increase in the

Arthur Christiansen, the legendary editor of the *Daily Express*, playing Jeff Jefferson, the newspaper editor, in the film *The Day The Earth Caught Fire.*


Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS
THE HOOP FALLS DOWN A DEEP CANYON AND BREAKS ITS FALL ON A WELL-KNOWN HEAD...
CHUNK
EGAD! THE SKY HAS FALLEN ON ME!
J.1557
THE HOOP NOW CHASES THE CHIEF TROLLEY MAN...
DO SOMETHING! IT'S AFTER ME...
HOW FAR DOWN DO WE HAVE TO GO?
JUST DOWN, MATE, JUST DOWN

ABOVE: The eponymous *Jones* steps through his hoop and gets involved with The Trolley Men; popular figures in the daily strip.

ABOVE: Peter Maddocks photographed in his beloved Fleet Street in the mid 1970s.

BELOW: Chastened by the author of this feature's critique of felt tip pens, *Four D. Jones* makes a dip pen comeback.

number of telephone calls to the *Daily Express*, with angry readers asking what had happened to their favourite *Four D. Jones* strip? I was called upstairs to the executive offices, and was offered the job as cartoon editor of Express Newspapers, which I suppose was an attempt to compensate me for the loss of producing the strip. However, the telephone calls increased in volume with angry readers saying 'Where the hell's *Four D. Jones?*' The calls continued, followed by letters, and even telegrams, so Pickering reluctantly had to reinstate *Four D. Jones* in its rightful place. I then had two jobs to do at the *Daily Express*, and a substantial increase in my fees.

"Pickering obviously disliked me even more after he had to climb down, and sometime later, when he was Vice Chairman of the Press Council, one reader complained that I had drawn a black bus driver. I was summoned to appear before the Council on a charge of racial discrimination, and had to justify myself to Pickering. It was long before we had President Obama, of course, but my answer was 'There are black doctors and lawyers; train drivers, teachers and nurses. How do I draw my *No. 10* strip if we have a black Prime Minister?' The case against me was dismissed, but I never did get an apology from Pickering for wasting my time!

"I still have a great affection for *Four D. Jones*, and loved every minute of it, but after doing it every day for ten years, it had run its course. I had survived four editors, but the fifth saw me off. Express Newspapers was owned by Lord Beaverbrook, and I thought of drowning *Jones* in Beaver's Brook, but in the end I had him struck by a bolt of lightning from above while he was crossing a rope bridge over a canyon. End of story!"

I first met Peter in 1965, just after he stopped producing *Four D. Jones*. We shared a healthy disregard for politicians, newspaper barons, and those in authority, and we became good friends. I introduced him to the editor of *Argosy;* the short story magazine who, over a period of time, commissioned him to create three colourful covers.

In the mid 1970s, I worked as a features sub-editor on the London *Evening News*, and one of my responsibilities was to design and sub-edit the business and financial pages. They looked very dull, so I suggested to Louis Kirby, the paper's editor, that we should ask Maddocks to make a drawing to illustrate the lead story on the page. He agreed, and it became a popular feature in the paper. Peter came to the paper to read the copy and make his drawing, and if I was away from my desk when he finished his drawings, he always left them with a note,

Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS
WHAT THE BLAZES ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THAT HOOP?
BID YOU GOODBYE
SCARPER! SCRAM! AND SUCH
GENTLEMEN, I WISH YOU GOOD DAY
HE'S GOING SOMEWHERE
STRANGE FELLOW
LOOK AFTER THE RAINMAKER, MY OLD MATE
I'M OFF TO SEEK A NEW ADVENTURE IN THIS SINFUL WORLD
Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS
JONES PASSES THROUGH THE HOOP OF THE FOURTH DIMENSION
THE PROCESS OF PASSING THROUGH TIME CAN PROVE SOMEWHAT PAINFUL TO OUR HERO - QUITE A STRAIN THIS LARK...
CRINGE
ONE LOSES ONE'S SENSE OF THIS AND THAT.....
I DO FOR ENGLAND
THE THINGS
QUITE NERVE-SHATTERING IT IS, JIM
Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS
OUR HERO HAS PASSED THRU' TIME, MATE
CALM YOURSELF, JONES... CALM YOURSELF
STRANGE MUSIC IS HEARD
STACK ME! THE PIPES OF PAN!
NO IT AIN'T, WELL I'M BLOWED, IT'S A FAIR GROUND - YEAH! A FUN-FAIR
THE HOOP MUST HAVE THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT
YOU'VE DONE WELL, MATE. LET'S LOOK AROUND...
Four D. Jones
EVERY CLOUD HAS A SINISTER LINING
BY MADDOCKS
J.1339
JONES ENTERS THE FUN-FAIR.....
FUN FAIR
THREE SHEETS TO THE WIND, MATE
STRUTH! HE LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE. I MUST WARN THE LADS

ABOVE: The intrepid *Jones* goes through the time-hoop to discover that clouds have sinister linings.

and a drawing of me. *The Daily Telegraph* soon followed the idea of illustrating their business and financial pages, and started to use Maddocks to do the drawings.

Peter Maddocks was born in Birmingham on the 1st April 1928, the son of a bus driver. He says, "It's a great

Told in Pictures

One-time Micron editor Keith Chapman reveals that there was a lot more to the oft maligned pocket library than meets the eye.

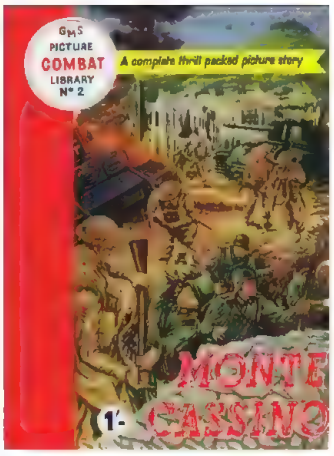
ABOVE: Micron's debut as a serious contender in the war pocket library market, was distinguished by its lurid cover art, and the addition of a red strip running down the side of the artwork to help differentiate it from its rivals.

TOLD IN PICTURES was a tagline prominently displayed on the covers of the pocket libraries; the small British paperback series making their reappearance in the early 1950s.

Before the intervention of World War II, the libraries had been largely text publications running to ninety-six pages set in newspaper-size body type. After the war, with the paper shortages, manpower shortages, and the consequent widespread closures of periodicals, tastes had changed. The returning new lines were intensively illustrated, sixty-four-page booklets where art and text were employed to tell stories in comic-book style.

Thus a latter-day verdict that artwork and storylines were "equally dire" or "pure crap" would be damning. Such opinions should be backed only by overwhelming evidence that a body of work had no redeeming features, and is therefore totally unworthy today of a connoisseur's interest.

Yet the "equally dire" verdict, and others of similar, sweepingly dismissive nature, are not uncommonly passed in collecting circles



ABOVE: The bulk of the early *Combat Picture Library* covers appear to be the work of Ed Blandford whose CV included a stint as art editor of UK paperback publisher Panther Books. Any shortcomings in his draughtsmanship were more than compensated for with strong layouts and bold lighting effects, all adding to the pulp-like immediacy of the early Micron product.

when the subject is raised of Micron Publications Ltd and in particular the *Combat Picture Library*.

In this feature—or rather by the medium of carefully reproduced book covers and interior illustrations, some scanned from the original art boards—I hope to give the lie to the all-encompassing disparagement of Micron's output.

First a "declaration of interest": I was an editor at Micron from late 1962 to mid 1964. Much of this feature will concentrate on that period, and may not be entirely objective, although like the good little "Wolf Cub" I was in days even earlier, I will do my best!

The company that became Micron, was founded in the 1950s by two disaffected workers from the Amalgamated Press/Fleetway House general office. The story goes that they were backed by some money from an aunt; told the boss what to do with their menial jobs, and launched the G. M. Smith Publishing Co. One of these clerks was a "Michael" Budge, the other

TOP: Moody and atmospheric cover art by John S. Smith for the Keith Chapman scripted story *Those in Peril*. ABOVE: Primo Macarini cover for *Combat Picture Library* 200, *Blood in the Orient*.

a "Ronald" Maiden, which gave rise to the "Micron" name. The company was under-capitalized from the start, and although its founders lacked editorial experience, they gave Fleetway commendable competition more than two years before Dundee publisher D C Thomson dipped a cautious toe into the war-comic water with *Commando* in July 1961. Fleetway's *War Picture Library* was launched in September 1958; *Combat Picture Library* in March 1959 with *Sea Hunt*.

Despite its expeditious start, GMS/Micron was always a minnow in the picture-libraries pond for reasons to be explored in a moment or two. Some of the early *Combat Picture Library* product has been labeled "dire", but the company offered an alternative platform to several artists who had their work used before or later by Fleetway and Thomson.

Examples included John Vernon, a long-serving cover artist for British paperback publishers, who at one stage turned out stories of *Jeff Curtiss*, "the Navy's ace troubleshooter" for *Combat Picture Library* at the rate of one a month.

Doug Church, an artist who became a key designer and developer of Fleetway comic titles, including *2000AD*, began his career drawing for the *Combat Picture Library*—and carried on to do one or two more after he had joined the giant London rival! I shared many lunch breaks with Doug and his friend Barrie Tomlinson, in later years a high-flying Fleetway Group Editor, but then a humble sub-editor working on *Tiger*; very keen on his amusing, Goon-like Anti-Trombone League. Doug would keep up an incessant, quick-fire patter. He always had an infectious chuckle ready for his own jokes. Doug's other abiding interest was hi-fi sound. In 2005, and in retirement, I'm told, "he loved the sound system he had installed in his house, and his love of terrible, terrible puns hadn't changed at all!"

John Pollack, another artist known for his book-jacket work, drew a *Combat Picture Library* series about *Nigel Hawke, Pioneer Air Fighter*, a character suggested by myself as a replacement for the Fleetway *Thriller Picture Library*'s discontinued World War I hero, *Dogfight Dixon*.

Other cross-company artists identified by collectors and bibliographers are Jorge Macabich, Fernando Fernandez, Raphael Auraleon, Frank Fuentes Man, and Ferran Sostres. Such a roll call, which is possibly far from complete, speaks for itself. Micron should not be slightingly cast aside.

My own association with Micron began in the autumn of 1962, when the company advertised two situations vacant in *World's Press News*. The jobs were for editors—one to be responsible for its new *8mm Magazine* for cine-film hobbyists—the other for the *Combat Picture Library*, and similar publications. Sadly, the company was already in serious financial trouble, and by July 1964 was bankrupt. But at this date it was expanding and moving its small editorial team into fresh new offices in Wallington, Surrey.

Station Chambers was above a supermarket on the corner of the main Woodcote Road and Ross Parade. The building was actually a converted Odeon cinema that had closed in 1957, and presumably hadn't been the right premises in the right place to become a bingo hall. In 1934, when it was built, it must have looked rather grand—white Portland stone facade in the art deco style, and an auditorium that could seat more than 900 film-goers. Today, I read that the supermarket has gone, and the building houses a pub, the Whispering Moon, with the original Odeon entrance and foyer as its entrance. In 1962, the only whispers were

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SOON, THE ROCKY COAST OF ICELAND WAS FAR BEHIND...
WELL HERE IT IS, BLACKIE — THE WORLD'S BIGGEST BATTLEGROUND... SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND SQUARE MILES OF IT!
A COASTAL COMMAND PATROL WAS A LONG, FATIGUING BUSINESS — OFTEN MONOTONOUS, ALWAYS A SEVERE TEST OF MAN AND MACHINE...
WHAT'S THE POINT OF AN ANTI-U-BOAT PATROL WHEN YOU DON'T NEET U-BOATS? THE TRENCHES? JUST CAN'T SEE THAT WE'RE DOING ANY BIT
COMBAT PICTURE LIBRARY
AND JEFF CUST SS AND HIS COMRADE IN ARMS LEADING SEAMAN ERNIE BLACK, BUT KNOW IT, THE TIME FOR THEIR VENGEANCE TO PAY ITS DIVIDENDS WAS NOT FAR AWAY...
IN THE CONTROL ROOM OF THE SURFACING U-BOAT ... KNIGHTS ... WITH SWORDS, VENTED HIS SPLEEN ON A ... ART FICER
... IT IS HARD TABLE, HERR KAPITAN! THE DAMAGED INSULATORS REQUIRE FREQUENT RECHARGING WE MUST SURFACE BY DAY AS WELL AS NIGHT --
"EUREKA! IT IS DANGEROUS FOLLY FOR US TO SURFACE IN DAYLIGHT YOU ARE A DISGRACE TO THE FATHERLAND IN YOUR IGNORANCE AND INCOMPETENCE!

that more than one hopeful Fleetway employee, especially among the juniors, saw opportunity in the Wallington opening, a bare half-hour's extra travel time down the tracks from the London Bridge terminus. I was one of those juniors. Straight from school sixteen months earlier, full of delight at the chance to work at the world-renowned Fleetway House, I was trapped on an editorial ladder negotiated by unions and management. In short, I had to be at Fleetway five years before getting a senior's pay. At Micron I would be paid as a senior immediately. I put in my application, and backed it up by submitting a war script for the *Combat Picture Library,* written rapidly, and enthusiastically over a weekend, although this was not anything suggested, let alone asked for, in the job advertisement.

The job was won, but boy, did it prove to be a sweatshop! Before my Micron time was out, I was responsible for editing each month four war titles, four westerns, two *Paul Temple Picture Library* issues reformatted laboriously from newspaper strips, and a one hundred and twenty-eight page text mystery magazine. I was given one junior art assistant.

In those days, the *War* and *Battle Picture Libraries* under Ted Bensberg at Fleetway employed a whole room full of sub-editors and art assistants on the fifth floor of a modern office building, named New Fleetway House. *Air Ace* and *Thriller Picture Libraries* occupied yet more office space and more people.

And Micron's Wallington nest didn't last long. Most of my time with them was spent in a draughty, unheated annex to the large shack that served as the

TOP: Two page spread showing John S. Smith interior artwork for *Those in Peril.*
ABOVE: Primo Macarini cover for *Combat Picture Library* 154, *Son of Satan.*

TOP: Romance interior spread from *Love Is Forever*.
ABOVE: Marcarini cover for *Romantic Adventure Library 73, Dive Into Danger*. Macarini was Micron's busiest cover artist.

G. M. Smith Publishing company's warehouse, hemmed in behind suburban semi-detached houses in Gorringe Park Avenue, Mitcham.

All this, being young and keen, I could cope with. But the biggest problem was the editorial budget: Micron paid its freelancers half Fleetway's rates, not on completion of the work but allegedly "on publication", and even this occasionally turned out to be "on threat of lawsuit". Welcome to the world of backstreet publishing! Nonetheless, I was able to attract scripts from many of the Fleetway writers including David Bingley, G. W. Brunt, Ken Bulmer, Mary Feldwick, T. C. H. Jacobs, Vic Hanson, and even a few from ex-colleagues working on the editorial staff of the Fleetway war libraries! They included Terry Magee and Peter Stewart, a best Fleetway friend who became the editor of *Shoot*, and who was later the PR man for West Ham United. I also wrote several scripts myself, of course.

With the increasing use of Spanish artists, through agencies like Selecciones Ilustradas, I felt that Micron's standards in that area were improved too. Micron would also use art from top-flight people not particularly known for comic strip work. For example, John S. Smith, whose reputation for maritime subjects is very high, did both the cover painting and the interior art for *Those in Peril*.

This was the script I later re-wrote as the opening text story for an *Eagle* annual. It was also reprinted over and over in the Hamlyn anthology *Thrilling Stories for Boys*. In fact, it was chosen for the cover illustration on that book. And who edited the anthology? None other than Leonard Matthews, editorial

2
ROMANTIC ADVENTURE LIBRARY
CLAIRE ASKED HERSELF... WHAT HAD LED UP TO THIS CHANGE?
YES, I CAN GIVE IT ALL UP... FOR THE MAN I LOVE
HER MIND FLEW BACK TO THE CROSS-ROADS OF HER LIFE... ONLY A FEW SHORT MONTHS AGO.
ROMANTIC ADVENTURE LIBRARY
3
SHE REMEMBERED... SHE HAD BEEN STANDING JUST LIKE THIS, WHEN DR. JUSTIN LATHAM SPOKE TO HER.
IS ANYTHING THE MATTER, STAFF-NURSE?
OFF DUTY JUSTIN WAS CLAIRE'S CLOSEST FRIEND ON THE HOSPITAL STAFF. NOW HE WAS REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT HER
I'M ALL RIGHT, DOCTOR JUST A LITTLE TIRED THAT'S ALL...
YOU'VE BEEN WORKING TOO HARD. COME TO MY OFFICE AND I'LL SEE IF THERE IS ANYTHING SERIOUSLY WRONG WITH YOU.

director, and overall boss of all the Fleetway comics in the heyday of the *War, Battle* and *Air Ace Picture Libraries*. So I think it's fair to say the *Combat Picture Library* story content could stand up with the best.

Most of the war and romance covers during my years at Micron were signed "P Mar": Primo Marcarini. I know little about him but I assumed he had some sort of long-term package deal. Looking around the internet today, I see he also did covers in the late 1950s for the Fleetway "told in pictures" romance libraries. These pages show examples of both his war and romance work.

The samples of interior work shown here from Micron's *Romantic Adventure Library* are by unknown Continental artists, but you can see they are in the same style, and to the same standard as the many similar love story picture libraries put out at the time by Leng-Thomson and Fleetway.

For the younger girls, Micron had a long-running *Schoolgirls' Adventure Library*, and a short-lived, text-only *Schoolgirls' Story Library*. Another text series that didn't run to many issues was *Women's Story Library*.

What happened to cover artist "P Mar" after the Micron work ended, I don't know. The other day I glanced through some art gallery and foreign language websites, and it seems he was active into the 1980s doing black magic/witchcraft or crime covers for European publishers. In these, erotic appeal seemed foremost with near-naked ladies dominating, or being dominated.

My boss at Micron, and immediate predecessor in the *Combat Picture Library* editing role, was C. T. Eriksen who moved up to be editorial director. Ron Maiden's original Micron partner, Mike Budge, had effectively quit; I was told his interest and money had shifted to motor-sport.

"Erik", as he was known, seemed to keep dealings with Marcarini to himself. So I have no idea what special arrangements were in place. I have a vague, and possibly faulty recollection that someone told me Erik had an Italian wife. Bibliographer Steve Holland has told me he corresponded with Erik, whose real first name was Cyril, in 2004, but it wasn't helpful:

"Congratulations on your diligence in finding me. Sadly, I cannot help you.

"I left publishing over thirty-five years ago, pursued another career, and have now been retired for sixteen years. You are going back a long way, too far back for me to have any recollections that could interest you. However, a very slight straw, the only person I can think of who could help you would be R. L. Maiden, who used to live in Purley. I don't know if he is still alive, but if he is, I'm sure you will find him! He was Managing Director of our group and at one time held file copies of all publications.

"Best wishes with your endeavour."

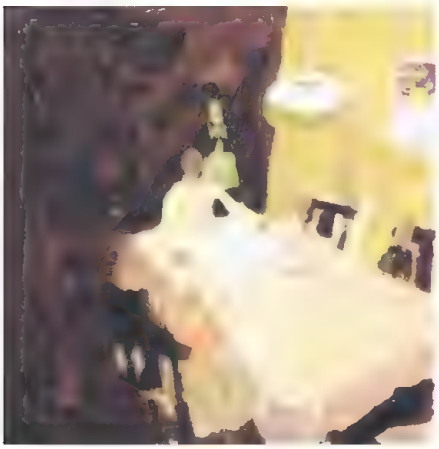
Steve found a record for the death in 1994 of a Ronald Leslie Maiden, born in 1933. So this avenue to the full Micron story is apparently closed as well.

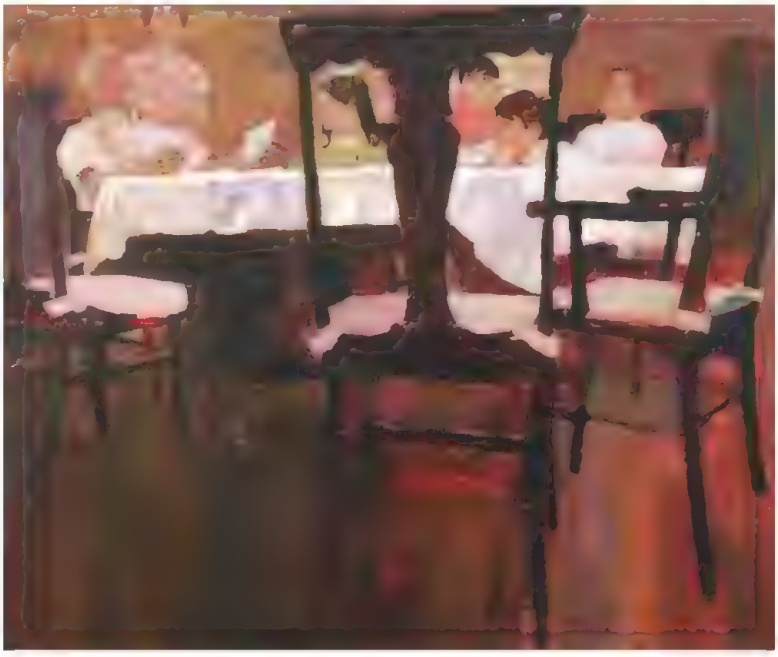
I believe another of the reasons Micron had for shifting part of its operation to Wallington in 1962, and taking on a new editor, was its expansion into western comics.

After a 12-year run, Fleetway Publications ended its *Cowboy Picture Library* in September 1962. The swelling ranks of war picture libraries were taking over news-agents' racks, leaving little room for anything different, especially if it was starting to look a little passé. In this regard, years of *Kit Carson* and *Buck Jones* had put a juvenile, make-believe stamp on Fleetway's *Cowboy Picture Library*, despite a cover makeover. War was ostensibly

TOP: Macarini cover art for *Love Is Forever*.
ABOVE: Romance art in archetypal 1960s girl comics style from *Dive Into Danger*.

Bernie Fuchs





ABOVE: Two try-outs of the same scene, with the upper image anticipating the artist's final choice for point-of-view.
ABOVE RIGHT & RIGHT: Having resolved all the elements and layout in the upper visual, Fuchs proceeded to work up all the details for the final image.

American illustrator Bernie Fuchs, who was probably the most influential illustrator in the second half of the 20th century, always put the function of the painting first, and the form second. He worked hard to get the right result, often producing numerous preliminary sketches, in his quest for excellence. They were done quickly and with enormous energy. His first two sketches are lively, and the compositions are unusual, but the third sketch is executed with considerable boldness, confirming that he was fully in his stride, and had found the right solution. The finished painting is masterly, both in composition and technique, and the silhouetting of the children with the chairs is stunning. It retains some of the energetic brushwork from the preliminary sketch, yet the figure work is detailed, and a study of controlled looseness. Combined with the skill of the page designer the published result is a complete master class. *Bryn Havord*

ABOVE: The painting as it appeared dropped into the art editor's layout with a sensitive choice of typography, playing to the strengths of Fuchs' artwork.

The Bookshelf

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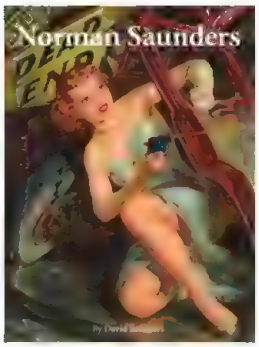
Nick Jones



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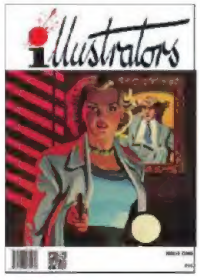

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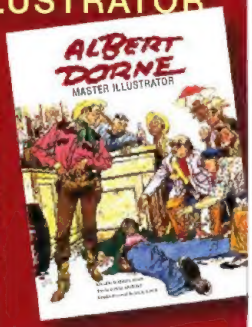

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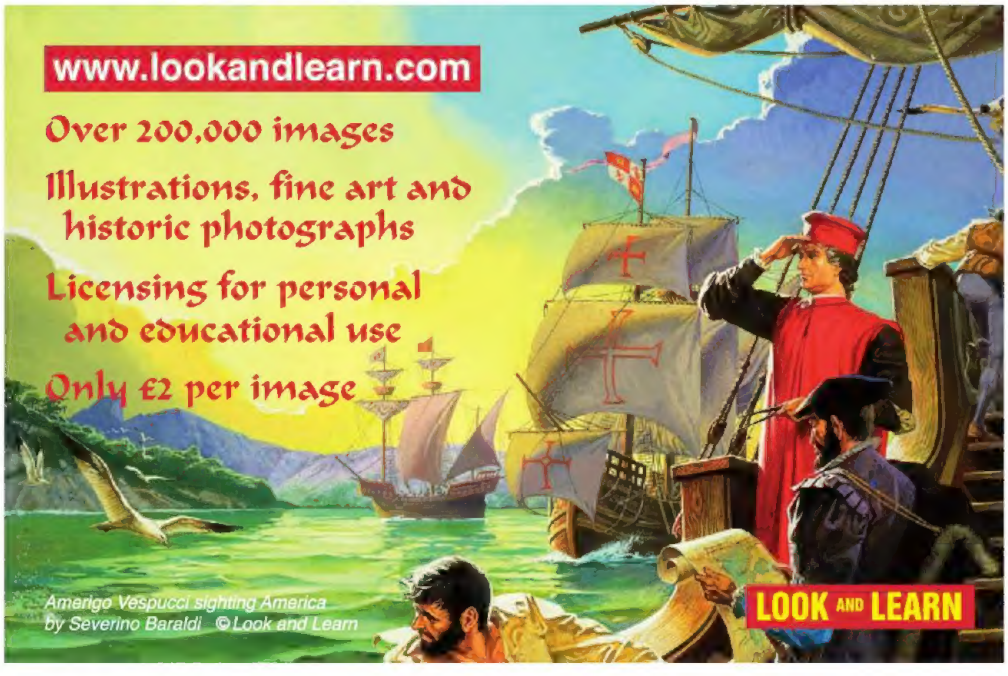
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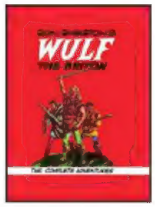

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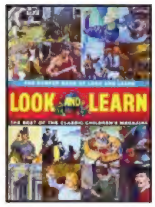

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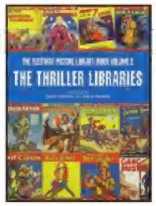

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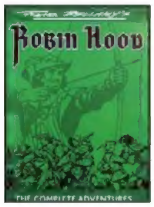

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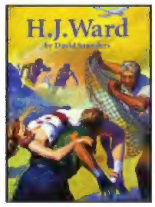

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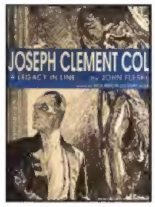

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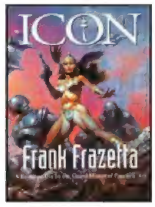

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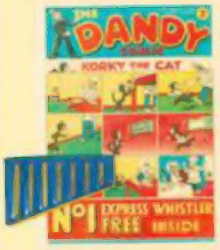

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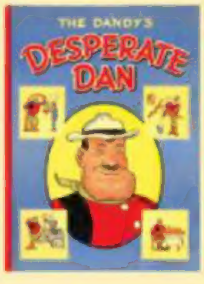

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